**Create Your Own Language** Activity

TOK

**Step 1**

You will each be given a box with **10-15** items. Some of these items will be physical objects, some will be pictures of physical objects and some will be abstract concepts. The objective of your group is to develop “names” for these items using a completely unique verbal language. It cannot be drawn from any known language (modern or “dead”) and cannot utilize common slang. All of your group members need to reach a consensus on the meaning, pronunciation and overall linguistic system used to name each of the items in your box. You have 10 minutes to name your items.

**Step 2**

Your group will have a 3-5 minute “conversation” that includes as many of your items as possible and the other groups in the class will witness it. The goal for your group is to discuss all of your items in a manner that shows that all of your group members have mastered your new language. The goal of those outside your group will be to decipher and decode your language and attempt to understand the linguistic system that shapes it.

**Step 3**

Once all of the groups have had a chance to present their languages, then we will have a TOK Bizarre. Each group will be given a shopping list of items that they are trying to acquire. There is no currency in our market so groups will have to rely on the barter system to trade for the goods they desire. You are only allowed to communicate in your own language and the languages of the other groups that you “think” you have deciphered. All other forms of verbal communication are prohibited and the language police will be circulating to enforce this rule. After 10 minutes, the group with the most items on their list will be declared the winners.

**Step 4**

The class will come together and we will discuss the below questions in a Socratic discussion:

1. **What is the nature of language and how does it define our world?**
2. **What are the limitations presented by these definitions?**
3. What different functions does language perform?
4. Which are most relevant in creating and communicating knowledge?
5. What did Aldous Huxley (1947) mean when he observed *“Words form the thread on which we string our experiences”?* To what extent is it possible to separate our experience of the world from the narratives we construct of them?